

Texas A&M President Kathy Banks To Retire Immediately

Dean Mark Welsh named acting president in wake of hiring controversy.

By Texas A&M University System Communications • JULY 21, 2023

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Chancellor John Sharp today announced Dean Mark A. Welsh III as acting President after Texas A&M University President M. Katherine Banks submitted a letter late Thursday announcing she would retire immediately.

The announcement comes after the Faculty Senate passed a resolution Wednesday to create a fact-finding committee into the mishandling of the hiring of Dr. Kathleen McElroy, a University of Texas professor, former *New York Times* journalist and graduate of Texas A&M University, class of 1981.

In June, the university announced the hiring of McElroy to revive the school's journalism program, but that fell apart as the details of the job offer changed from a position with the possibility of tenure to a one-year professor of practice appointment, with the option to renew.

At the Faculty Senate meeting Wednesday, President Banks denied knowing about the changes in the job offer but took responsibility for a flawed hiring process after a wave of national publicity suggesting McElroy, who has done research on diversity and inclusion, was a victim of "anti-woke" hysteria and outside interference in the faculty hiring process.

Public universities in Texas are in the middle of eliminating offices of Diversity, Equity and Inclusion to comply with recent state legislation.

In her resignation letter to Chancellor Sharp, President Banks wrote, "The recent challenges regarding Dr. McElroy have made it clear to me that I must retire immediately. The negative press is a distraction from the wonderful work being done here."

Two years ago, Dr. Banks became the 26th president of Texas A&M University after a decade of excellence as Vice Chancellor and Dean of Engineering at the university. She led efforts for the Texas A&M System to become the only university in Texas to help manage a national weapons lab, the Los Alamos National Laboratory; created EnMed, a program training engineers to become medical doctors; and oversaw dramatic enrollment growth at the nation's largest engineering school.

Chancellor Sharp thanked Dr. Banks for her years of service and named Welsh as acting president until the Board of Regents can meet to name an Interim President. Chancellor Sharp is recommending Welsh continue as Interim President until a national search can find Dr. Banks' successor.

Welsh, a retired Air Force general, is the Dean of the Bush School of Government and Public Service.

President Kathy Banks' Resignation Letter

Chancellor,

First, thank you for the opportunity to serve at this wonderful university. It has been an honor of a lifetime.

The recent challenges regarding Dr. McElroy have made it clear to me that I must retire immediately. The negative press is a distraction from the wonderful work being done here.

I wish Texas A&M nothing but the best. It has been a privilege to serve under you.

Kathy

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The Texas A&M University System is one of the largest systems of higher education in the nation, with a budget of \$7.2 billion. Through a statewide network of 11 universities, a comprehensive health science center, eight state agencies, and the RELLIS Campus, the Texas A&M System educates more than 152,000 students and makes more than 24 million additional educational contacts through service and outreach programs each year. System-wide, research and development expenditures exceed \$1 billion and help drive the state's economy.

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